

be provided to whomever the government requires, and that, obviously and appropriately, will include those in the LGBT community.

Mr. Speaker, if the Russell amendment is discriminatory, then so is the First Amendment, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

If allowing a religious entity to employ persons who share its beliefs is discriminatory, then so are all these other Congresses. It is inaccurate to portray the Russell amendment as anything other than a narrowly drawn effort to protect religious freedom.

#### NEW ENGLAND COMPOUNDING CENTER TRAGEDY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BISHOP) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to a public health atrocity that is being ignored by the current administration and the current administration's continued failure to ensure justice for American citizens.

As many Members in this body will recall, in 2012, the New England Compounding Center manufactured and distributed nonsterilized injections to clinics and hospitals around the Nation. After receiving those injections, more than 750 people nationwide developed fungal meningitis. To date, 76 people have died as a result.

As you can see by the illustration to my left, this is a nationwide issue. The epicenter, however, of the outbreak was in Michigan's Eighth District, which I proudly represent. More than 200 people became sick, and 15 people died after receiving the tainted injection from a clinic in our district.

Because of the reckless disregard for the health and safety of the recipients of these drugs, the Department of Justice secured 131 convictions against 14 individuals, including 25 counts of second degree murder against the two main defendants for the deaths occurring in seven States.

Although this outbreak happened almost 4 years ago, the consequences are still very real today. Just the other week I was approached by a gentleman whose wife had died as a result of a lethal injection she received. It was, of course, heart-wrenching to hear the agony he went through and continues to deal with after losing his best friend and wife to this terrible tragedy.

Whether it is someone who has lost a loved one or a victim now living with chronic pain and sickness or a family member caring for an ill victim, this is a national tragedy, and the people need to be heard.

Not only have the day-to-day lives of these victims been irretrievably altered, they have also been financially ruined. Just to give you an idea, copays on some of the drugs for the treatments required for this illness are

up to \$5,000 per month, and despite multiple bipartisan requests from Members of both this body and the Senate, the Department of Health and Human Services has rejected all requests to waive rights to collect on Medicare liens they have placed on the settlement issued last year. That means that victims will get very little from their compensation funds. In fact, to this date, they have received not a dime.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but now the Obama administration, through the Office of Management and Budget, has blocked the ability of victims to get compensation from the Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program, otherwise known as the AEAP for short. The AEAP was created utilizing funds from the Federal crime victims fund, a fund specifically set aside to compensate victims of crimes. The fund gets its resources from not taxpayer dollars, but through a special assessment on convicted criminals. They get it through criminal fines, penalties, and forfeited bail bonds.

Without any explanation, a bureaucrat at the Office of Management and Budget has blocked the decision of a Senate-confirmed Assistant Attorney General to compensate victims of this act which the Department of Justice has recognized as criminal.

These are innocent Americans whose lives have been destroyed by criminals who will never meet them, will never feel their pain, hear the pain in their voices, will never see the irreversible damage they have caused. But, Mr. Speaker, I see it, and the 17 other colleagues of mine who have signed this bipartisan letter to the Office of Management and Budget see it, too.

Justice must be served. If the Attorney General won't speak up to advocate for justice, as secured by the hard-working Assistant Attorneys General on this case, and the administration won't reverse its decision, then the citizens of this country and the victims and their families deserve to know why they have been denied justice.

As a former prosecutor myself for my local community, I understand full well that victims of crimes need an advocate to stand up for them. Nothing—and I mean nothing—will reverse the harm that has been caused by this act. But at the very least, we must ensure justice for the people, and we must hold those responsible accountable for their actions. I urge my colleagues to join me in this effort.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 54 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois) at noon.

#### PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

God of mercy, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

We ask Your blessing upon this assembly and upon all to whom the authority of government is given. Help them to attend to the immediate needs and concerns of the moment, all the while enlightened by the majesty of Your creation and Your eternal Spirit.

The season of graduation for millions of American youth is upon us. May our appreciation as a Nation of the value of education among those who are our future be incentive enough to guarantee its importance in our public policy considerations.

May all that is done within the people's House this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

#### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from New York (Mr. ZELDIN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. ZELDIN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

#### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ESSAY COMPETITION

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to have held an essay competition for elementary school students throughout the Second Congressional District of South Carolina. The "Smiling Faces, Beautiful Places" essay competition received